

# Letters

## Sounding off about Shah

For many long months I've worked hard to publicize Tarik Shah's plight, hoping that national press coverage could be brought to bear on the case and that this would bring about a public outcry to let the man go. Now we have national press coverage written by someone who demonstrates total ignorance of issues of constitutional rights, civil rights and human rights raised by the Tarik Shah case, a writer heedless of the horror of an artist held in a small cage for a year with the lights on 24 hours a day, no musical instrument to play, no one to talk with, having been convicted of nothing, having injured or killed no one, having no criminal record or history whatsoever.

Yes, Tarik Shah is "alleged to have agreed to provide martial-arts training," and yes, he is "alleged to have conspired to transfer money." Is he alleged actually to have provided any training or transferred any money? Well, no. Has he been tried for these things or convicted of these things? Well, no. Not to worry, David Adler is on the case, and based on the one pretrial hearing he attended, writing about my e-mail calls to the jazz community for support, he stated, "Very few turned up," while two sentences before that he wrote, "The gallery was full of friends and relatives." Who does Adler think those friends and relatives were?

We're not talking about Wynton Marsalis or John Zorn here. Personally, I saw quite a few members of the jazz community at the three hearings I attended, and normally I'd name them, but under these circumstances they'd probably rather I didn't for fear that they'll be targeted too.

Worst of all is the first sentence of Adler's closing paragraph: "One thing is certain: This is a poor way for a jazz bassist to make headlines." I find that sentence and its implications inexcusable: "Why worry, folks? This is all just a giant publicity stunt!"

**MARGARET DAVIS**  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

David Adler's article on Tarik Shah [a fine bassist beloved by the jazz community for his great playing and his peace-loving, positive and friendly nature] misses the point on several issues. It's inhuman and outrageous for anyone in a democratic country to be thrown into a situation of months and months of solitary confinement under less than human conditions while awaiting trial. Whether charged or not charged, whether guilty or innocent, he is a human being and we should all feel indignation at this erosion of our basic civil rights. In the '50s, the catchword and excuse for stripping one of his/her rights was "communist" or "red." Most of us remember friends who per-

manently lost their jobs and/or even committed suicide because of these exaggerated and invented accusations. Now the catchword is "terrorist," tossed around like a rubber ball in places where it altogether does not fit, such as in Tarik's case.

**CAROL SUDHALTER**  
LOCAL 802 MUSICIANS' UNION  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

Your Tarik Shah case coverage left a lot to be desired. Shah is a talented musician without any arrest record. He was picked up, after what looks like entrapment by an overzealous undercover cop, on the charge of merely discussing providing "aid" to Muslim extremist groups. He has since been incarcerated for upward of a year in solitary confinement without trial. He, like all Americans, is innocent until proven guilty. The jazz community and its publications should be supportive of his efforts to have his day in court as soon as possible. Justice delayed is truly justice denied.

The flippant way your writer David Adler discussed the case, at one point comparing it to a publicity stunt, is appalling. Next time, assign someone who grasps the gravity of the situation—in terms of both the mental and physical anguish Shah and his family are surely suffering and the threat to the constitutional rights of all Americans.

**RICK THEIS**  
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

*David R. Adler replies:*

It is false and outrageous for anyone to argue that I likened Shah's support campaign to a "giant publicity stunt." I wrote: "This is a poor way for a jazz bassist to make headlines"—in other words, it is regrettable that Shah is now better known for his legal plight than for his playing. I'd say the same for any artist involved in a high-profile trial. Nowhere did I impugn Ms. Davis' motives.

Far from brushing aside concerns about Shah's confinement, I included a statement by attorney Edward David Wilford on the persistent violation of Shah's Sixth Amendment rights. I also stressed the presumption of innocence and even raised the possibility of entrapment. Still, I stand by my account of the hearing and my reading of the indictment.

### SEND LETTERS TO:

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